



Immunization

Varicella Vaccine: Varivax III

What is Varicella?

Varicella or chickenpox is a highly communicable disease in children, adolescents, and adults caused by the varicella-zoster virus. Fever and a vesicular (fluid-filled) rash are associated with the illness.

Varicella complications:

Complications occur in 5% to 10% of healthy children and may include:

- Secondary bacterial skin and soft tissue infections
- Otitis media, bacteremia, osteomyelitis, septic arthritis, endocarditis, necrotizing fasciitis, toxic shock-like syndrome, mild hepatitis and thrombocytopenia

What is Varivax III?

Varivax III is a varicella virus vaccine. It is used to vaccinate people 12 months of age and older against the varicella virus.

What is the dosage for Varivax III vaccine?

- Children 12 months to 12 years of age should receive a single dose injected under the skin
- Varicella may be given at the same time as MMR but with a separate needle and syringe and at a separate site
- If not given with MMR, there should be at least 28 days between the administration of the two vaccines
- Adolescents and adults 13 years of age and older should receive one dose injected under the skin at an elected date and a second dose 4 to 8 weeks later
- No booster doses are recommended

Who should not get the Varivax III vaccine?

- Pregnant women
- Women of child-bearing age should avoid pregnancy for three months after the vaccine is given
- Anyone with a history of hypersensitivity to any component of the vaccine, including gelatin and neomycin
- The immunocompromised
- Anyone with active tuberculosis
- Individuals with any active febrile illness with fever higher than 38.5°C. Fever alone is not a contraindication

Adverse Reactions:

- Pain and redness at the site of the injection
- Non injection site, Varicella-like rash
- Low-grade fever

***All patients should stay in the patient waiting area for 15 minutes after their shot, in case of adverse reaction.**

References: Health Canada (CCDR), Merck Frosst product monograph - 01/2004-kc

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